

Dear Members,

Thirteen Maltese organisations have decided to work together to bring an end to spring hunting in Malta. The first task of the **Coalition for the Abolition of Spring Hunting** is to gather at least 34,000 signatures to petition the government to hold a referendum to abolish the law that allows spring hunting.

We need your help to make this happen. Overleaf please find a copy of the petition form, with space for 12 signatures that we would like you to try and collect. It is important that you follow these simple guidelines to make every signature count:

- Only adult Maltese citizens (eligible voters) can sign the petition
- Details must correspond to those on ID card, i.e. full name and surname, full address, etc.*
- No digital signatures please - everything must be handwritten, clearly and legibly (preferably in block letters).

Please try to get as many people as you can to sign. It may be a good idea to make a copy of the form while it's blank, which you may wish to give to trusted friends to get others *they* know to sign as well.

To return the completed forms, try to do so by hand to the BirdLife office (or via any BirdLife official you may know), at Għadira or Is-Simar nature reserves, at a BirdLife activity, or call us for assistance. Leave the post as a last resort, so that no form gets lost. **Please return all forms by 15 October 2013.**

To be better informed about the issue, please take some time to read the information on the right.

Thank you for your support.



What spring hunting takes place in Malta?

To hunt birds in spring, hunters apply for a license that allows them to shoot quails (summien) and turtle doves (gamiem) for two weeks in April. Last spring about 9500 hunters were licensed to shoot up to 11,000 turtle doves and 5000 quail among themselves. The licence (previously €50) is free of charge, and hunters are asked to report what they catch by sending an SMS to the relevant authority.

Why is spring hunting a problem for birds?

In spring, birds migrating over Malta are heading north to mainland Europe in order to nest. Killing birds in spring means they will not be able to breed, and this depletes their population. Both Common Quail and Turtle Dove are declining in Europe and are listed as species of conservation concern. Shooting them down while they are on their way to increase their number can never be considered sustainable.

Another problem is that number of hunters also shoot other birds during spring. Rare and protected species are especially vulnerable. Marsh Harriers, Common Cuckoos, European Nightjars, Ospreys, Lesser Spotted Eagles and Pallid Harriers have all been shot, despite the fact that they are protected. Some of these birds have declined so much that they are bred in Europe in special programmes to regenerate their populations in the wild.

Is spring hunting allowed in Europe?

Spring hunting and trapping are expressly forbidden by the EU Birds Directive. However, derogations (i.e. exceptions) can be applied by a Member State if there is no satisfactory alternative, and subject to several conditions, such as a very limited catch allowed, strict supervision, etc. A Member State who applies a derogation must also report annually to the European Commission to justify the derogation and to explain in detail how the conditions have been met. Our governments have failed to comply with these conditions, which is why Malta has been issued repeated warnings by the Commission.

If it's the law, why is there a need for a referendum?

Successive governments have failed to deal with the problem of spring hunting. Instead, they have given hunters privileges in return for their votes. Hunters are a small minority of the Maltese population, and recent opinion polls show that at least 60% of voters want spring hunting abolished.

In view of the consistent lack of action by government and inertia on the European Commission's part, the Coalition believes it is time for the people to have their say through a referendum to remove the law that allows hunting in spring.

Isn't it unfair to deprive hunters of their hobby?

Maltese bird hunters already have five months in autumn and winter – from 1 September to 31 January – in which to hunt, and in which they can legally kill over 40 species of birds. For rabbit hunters the open season is seven months – from 1 June to 31 December.

This petition is not for a year-round ban on hunting, but only for a ban on hunting in spring.

Who are the Coalition for the Abolition of Spring Hunting?

The 13 organisations making up the Coalition are:

- **Alternattiva Demokratika**
- **BirdLife Malta**
- **Coalition for Animal Rights**
- **Din l-Art Hejwa**
- **Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar**
- **Friends of the Earth Malta**
- **Gaia Foundation**
- **Greenhouse Malta**
- **International Animal Rescue Association**
- **Malta Organic Agriculture Movement**
- **Moviment Graffiti**
- **Nature Trust Malta**
- **Ramblers Association of Malta**

To contact the coalition secretariat or for more forms please send an email to cashmalta2013@gmail.com or call us on **21347644/5/6**

*If the electoral division is not known, the box can be left blank.

Malta and Gozo Electoral Districts

- District 1** Valletta, Floriana, Hamrun, *part of* Marsa (Trinity Parish Area)
- District 2** Birgu, Isla, Bormla, Zabbar, Kalkara, Xghajra, St.Peter's
- District 3** Zejtun, *part of* Fgura (tal-Liedna area), Marsaskala
- District 4** Gudja, Ghaxaq, *part of* Marsa (Maria Regina area), Paola, Santa Lucija, *part of* Fgura (Mater Boni Consigli area), Tarxien
- District 5** Birzebbuga, Kirkop, Hal Safi, Zurrieq, Marsaxlokk, Imqabba, Qrendi, Bubaqra
- District 6** Luqa, Qormi, Siggiewi
- District 7** Zebbug, Dingli, Mdina, Mgarr, Imtarfa, Rabat (Malta), Bahrija, tal-Virtu'
- District 8** Birkirkara, Fleur de Lys, parts of Swatar, Iklin, Lija, *part of* Naxxar (Simblija area), *part of* Santa Venera (Old Railway Track area)
- District 9** Gharghur, Msida, *part of* Swatar, San Gwann, Kappara, Ibrag, Swieqi, Madliena, Kappara, ta' Xbiex
- District 10** Gzira, Pembroke, St Julians, Paceville, Sliema
- District 11** Attard, Balzan, Mosta
- District 12** Mellieha, Manikata, *part of* Naxxar (all other parts except Simblija), Bahar ic-Caghaq, San Pawl il-Bahar, Burmarrad
- District 13** *This district consists of the islands of Gozo and Comino:*
Rabat (Gozo), Victoria, Fontana, Ghajnsielem, Gharb, Ghasri, Kercem, Santa Lucija (Gozo), Munxar, Xlendi, Nadur, Qala, San Lawrenz, Ta' Sannat, Xghara, Xewkija, Zebbug, Marsalforn